

Dr. James G. Blight  
Center for Science and International Affairs  
Harvard University

October 3, 1987

Dear Jim,

It has been very hard for me to know how to respond to your letter of September 5. If the reasons for my puzzlement are not obvious, it might help you to reread it alongside your letter of August 29, as I have just done.

The two respective proposals, of course, are sharply at odds. As I understand your most recent letter (I must say that I am tempted to follow Robert Kennedy in ignoring the later letter and addressing only the earlier one!) your own initial proposal, based on discussions with Nye, Welch and others, was, in effect, vetoed by Neustadt and Schelling (and perhaps Allison, whose views you did not mention separately). In other words, from an organizational point of view (Model II), I gather that you made the somewhat embarrassing discovery that your enthusiastic overtures and suggestions to me, though avowedly tentative, were premature, with respect to clearance from these senior members.

I have no need to argue with their negative judgements. I know that their concern is sincere, I appreciate their thinking about what is best for me, as well as for the Kennedy School, and I can agree with much that they say. But I am left thinking that your original proposal (of August 29) was more worthy of consideration--though that is now neither here nor there--and that the latest proposed procedure is not really appropriate, though I have regard for your intentions.

In one respect, which may have shaped the tone of some of the comments, Neustadt and Schelling seem to have misunderstood the situation. Their "message" to me that "If you [Ellsberg] want this thing to come out in a way that involves them and Harvard..." suggests strongly that they are under the misapprehension that the idea that I come to Harvard and address a public seminar--as the forum for the findings and analysis I would like to inject into public discussion, preferably this fall--came from me, as a suggestion or request, rather than, tentatively but energetically, as a proposal from Harvard, i.e., from you. Perhaps you could clarify this for them.

The fact is that I have no special desire to involve them or Harvard in any of this--I was glad to hear your interest and your encouragement to consider Harvard as the place to release my findings, but it was only your proposals that raised the issue in my mind--and from your latest letter it is clear that this would be inappropriate.

.

I don't mean to be offhand in rejecting your new proposal, which I know is sincerely meant and, I'm sure, reflects some effortful negotiating on your part. I think it is enough to say that it does not seem to me truly to reflect "rules of the game" of academic scholarship and public education as I have long been familiar with these--most recently, as Regent's Lecturer at the University of California, Irvine, in faculty seminars at the Universities of Chicago, Irvine and Stanford, or as an invited speaker at the American Philosophical Association meetings--nor, let me guess, does it correspond to rules laid down for other speakers at your Harvard-MIT Avoiding Nuclear War seminars or other seminars. But it does have the ring, surprisingly, of rules and procedures even more familiar to me from my past life among consultants to or officials of the national security establishment. That milieu is long behind me, by my choice.

Without going into an argument here I think these points will come through clearly if you compare your criteria for inviting someone to give an open seminar in your earlier letter--quite appropriate to academia, it seems to me--with the criteria and the procedure prescribed in the latest letter.

To mention just one point, I can't make anything out of the assertion that such an invitation to address a public seminar (which is not, in fact, ordinarily required to be preceded by "an absolutely private seminar") amounts to an "assumption" by the sponsors of the seminar, in advance of hearing the presentation, that it is "correct" in its interpretation--whatever that could mean--and/or in its facts.

Perhaps that refers to the aspect of inviting journalists and encouraging reportage: again, your own suggestion, agreeable to me but not my idea or requirement for leading a discussion. Could it be that the adverse reaction was mainly predicated on that aspect of publicity? Yet from what you told me that seems to correspond to regular practice at the particular seminar which you initially mentioned, the Harvard-MIT AWP Discussion Group. Did Harvard accept responsibility for the "correctness" of Richard Perle's presentation, or "assume" it (or vet it) in advance? If so--I can't resist asking--how did that work out? (Of course, I understand the rules might be different for novelists). But that is only one of a number of puzzles, which don't, as a whole, seem worth addressing at this point.

Of course, I would be happy to take part in any discussions of the Crisis or other matters at the Kennedy School or your Center, informally or as seminar participant or presenter, whenever that could be coordinated with a trip East, which shouldn't be hard to arrange; just give me the word (or I can let you know in advance when I will be East).

Since I am concentrating on the Crisis as the first case study I am examining for my MacArthur Foundation research, I



would greatly appreciate getting the materials you offered to send me--the October 27 transcript to appear in IS, the Rusk letter, the Meeker memorandum, and whatever is available of the Hawk's Key discussion (I take it these are all in process of publication, with the possible exception of the last). Of course, if some hitch has developed with respect to providing any of these, I will wait to see them in print.

Please give my warm regards to my old friends and colleagues, and above all to Janet. I enjoyed our long, substantive phone conversations very much, as I'm sure you could tell, and I look forward to even longer discussions with you and Janet when I'm in Cambridge.